



Institutional Support for Entrepreneurship Development in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Purpose: *Entrepreneurs need various support services, like infrastructural facilities, counseling, training, market promotion, information, etc. to start and run their businesses. Such services make the job easier for potential entrepreneurs to ensure a smooth start and efficient management of their businesses. The purpose of this study is to explore the institutional support facilities available for entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.*

Method: *This is a descriptive study based on secondary data. It provides a brief description of the relevant organizations that facilitate starting and running the business in the context of Bangladesh. Also it includes the empirical studies conducted on the performance of such institutions.*

Result: *There are several institutions, in one way or the other, involved in the process of entrepreneurship development in the country. But it is found that the institutions are not performing at par. They are lacking in their technical, managerial, and behavioral aspects.*

Implications: *In order to yield greater result these institutions should be equipped with more resources and the employees of these institutions should be trained to be more proactive in providing services to entrepreneurs indiscriminately*

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship Development, Institutional support, Services, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs need various support services, like infrastructural facilities, counseling, training, market promotion, information, etc. to start and run their businesses. Such services make the job easier for potential entrepreneurs to ensure a smooth start and efficient management of their businesses. In Bangladesh, both the government and private organizations are found to offer these services. This article starts with an introduction to the Entrepreneurship Development Cycle, pertinent to the support services. It also includes a brief description of all the relevant

organizations, both in the private and public sectors as well as a rundown of the studies conducted on the performance of these organizations.

2. Entrepreneurship Development Cycle

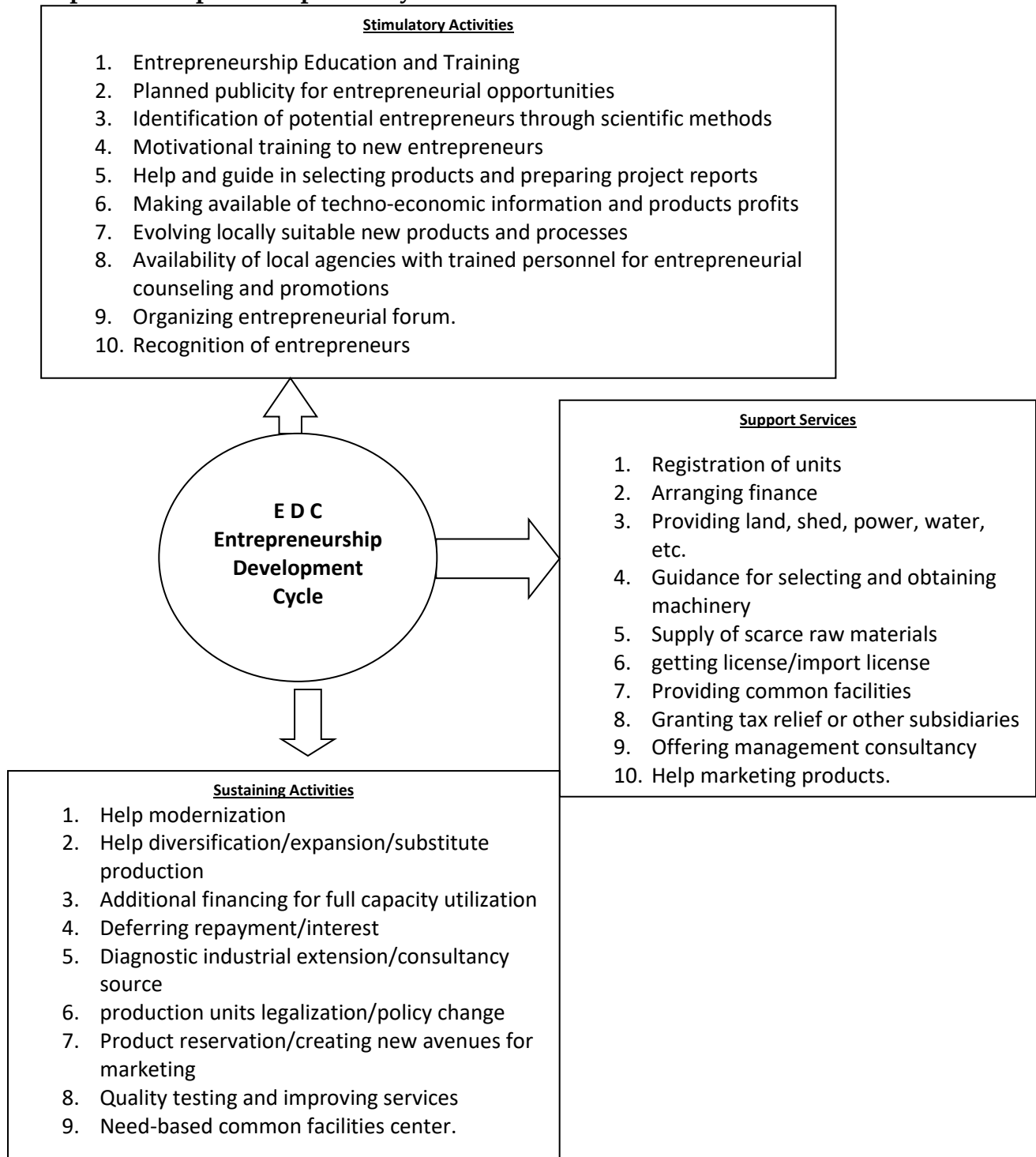


Figure 1: Entrepreneurship Development Cycle

To develop entrepreneurship in a country requires a comprehensive effort that covers various activities right from the stimulation to its long term survival. The schema of such a comprehensive intervention effort is suggested by Dr. M.M. P. Akhouri, Formerly Executive Director of National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Delhi, in the form of Entrepreneurship Development Cycle (Figure 1). The cycle identified three groups of activities concerning entrepreneurship development. They are:

- A. Stimulatory
- B. Support and
- C. Sustaining Activities

A. The Stimulatory activities comprising entrepreneurial education, provision of entrepreneurial opportunities, and guidance in selecting industries, the supply of techno-economic information, are needed to help the emergence of entrepreneurship in society. The support ensures a good supply of entrepreneurs to start a new venture and developed potentiality to succeed in a venture.

B. Support activities refer to those which enable the entrepreneurs in setting up and running the enterprises successfully. They help in mobilizing resources and assistance. They include arranging finance, providing land, shed, power and other utilities, the supply of capital machinery, scarce raw materials, offering management consultancy, help marketing products, etc.

C. The sustaining activities include the challenges of actual operation. Many enterprises starting well, meet immature death subsequently because of some problems. Such cases are many and they are particularly more significant in the field of small enterprises.

According to Rahman (1989), the above groups of activities play complementary roles to each other. Therefore, they should be developed in a balanced way and of course not placing more emphasis on some activities while negligence to others. In Bangladesh, a good number of institutions in both the public and private sectors provide varied types of assistance to the entrepreneurs.

3. Institutions for providing services to the entrepreneurs

Some of the important institutions are outlined in the following sections.

3.1. Board of Investment

The Board of Investment (BOI) was established by the Investment Board Act of 1989 to promote and facilitate investment in the private sector both from domestic and overseas sources with a view to contributing to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. It is headed by the Prime Minister and is a part of the Prime Minister's Office. Major Functions of BOI include providing necessary facilities and assistance in the establishment of industries, implementing investment-related GOB policies, registering private sector industrial projects, and facilitating investment by providing information and services. The BOI also includes a Utility Service Cell

that offers pre-investment counseling, facilitation of utility connections, and assistance with import clearance and warehousing licenses.

3.2. Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA)

The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) is the official organ of the government to promote, attract, and facilitate foreign investment in the Export Processing Zones. The primary objective of an EPZ is to provide special areas where potential investors would find a congenial investment climate, free from cumbersome procedures. There are eight EPZs in Bangladesh. At the moment seven of them are in operation and another one is in the implementation stage. The EPZs are Chittagong, Dhaka Mongla, Ishwardi, Comilla, Uttara, and Adamjee. The basic facilities available in every EPZ are Customs Office, Police Station, Banks, Restaurant, Health Club, Recreational Center, In-house Security, Sports Complex, Exclusive Telephone Exchange, and Electricity Sub-station.

3.3. Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)

Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Bangladesh under the Ministry of Commerce is a government agency of the country, entrusted with the responsibilities of promoting export of the country. It is mainly responsible for coordinating export development efforts at different sectors and production levels, exploring markets of exportable products and services abroad, collecting and disseminating trade information to the stakeholders, organizing participation in international trade fairs abroad

3.4. Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC)

BSCIC is the prime organization entrusted with the responsibility of promotion and development of small, cottage, and rural industries in the country. It is the successor of the former East Pakistan Small Industries Corporation (EPSIC), which was established by an Act of the Parliament in 1957. Its Head Quarter is in Dhaka having 4 Regional offices and 64 District offices. It is a Government statutory body. BSCIC provides pre-investment counseling services, in-plant advisory services, technical information, etc. It supplies Designs and prototypes, Industrial profiles, and Market information to interested entrepreneurs. BSCIC also assists in the financing of small and cottage industries through DFIs & NCBs, selection of the right type of machinery, establishing subcontracting linkages, and studying investment feasibility. It Organizes technical and management skill development training, fairs and exhibitions, etc. It registers industrial units; recommends fiscal incentives and import entitlement, and issues work permits to Foreign Nationals. BSCIC maintains well-developed industrial Estates with gas, electricity, water, etc. in different districts. Presently there are 30 such Estates are available. A part of its facilitative role, BSCIC is now implementing a huge Shilpa Palli (Industrial Village) at Gazaria, Munshiganj with around 700 industrial plots having full-fledged infrastructural facilities.

3.5. Small and Medium Enterprise Foundation

The Small & Medium Enterprise Foundation (SMEF) formally inaugurated on July 17, 2007, is an independent center of excellence created and generously capitalized by the Government of Bangladesh. The abiding mission of the Foundation is to ensure spurring growth rate of SMEs, upgrade capacities and productivities by existing SMEs and provide stimulus to the emergence of new enterprises, their capacity to generate employment, and reduce poverty. The foundation is governed by a 12 member board of directors selected from both government and private sectors. The major objectives of the foundation are:

- To promote, support, strengthen, and encourage the growth and development of SMEs in all productive sectors of the economy, including the service sector, throughout the country.
- To plan, program, and finance interventions for delivery by private sector organizations, including chambers, associations, trade bodies, research, and development institutions including universities, consultancy companies, and professionals.
- To institute SME Awards in order to promote competitiveness among SMEs.
- To facilitate SME access to finance by creating and supporting appropriate strategies and institutions in order to encourage and promote potential SME booster sub-sectors, but shall not sanction and/or deal in direct credit delivery to SME clients. However, SMEF may also promote, select, and supply funds to banks and financial institutions having wide outreach throughout the country for onward lending to SME clients all over the country.
- To rationalize public sector approaches and support structures for SME development through systematic capacity assessment and interventions for organizational development and institutional capacity building.
- To create a pro-growth and pro-poor business environment in which both existing and aspiring SME entrepreneurs, affordably find what they need---namely, access to finance, information, counseling, mentoring, marketing, and design know-how, networking, linkages, representation and the power of agency to succeed.
- To create appropriate incentives, mechanisms, and support structures to facilitate the formation of new enterprises, ensuring enterprise competitiveness, and promoting sustained growth of existing businesses.
- To identify and report policy anomalies, market and institutional failures that are prejudicial to the legitimate interests of SMEs, based on in-depth research, and stakeholder consultations.
- To encourage improvement in the SME business environment by gradually becoming a one-stop facilitation window center for SMEs in getting licenses and approvals from various agencies and departments, and in accessing other required services.
- To create a database and provide all needed information about SMEs to investors and service providers

- To encourage and motivate financial institutions, industry and trade associations, civil-society institutions and bodies, including SMEs own cooperative “bodies” to meaningfully enhance their capacities for SME development
- To implement a strategy for facilitating applied R & D while harnessing the synergies existing within the public sector, corporate and private sector, and the research and university system.
- To actively foster greater collaboration, in both design and commercialization, between industry, civil society, and academia in the interest of harmonious development of human resources, and delivery systems for SME development.

The Foundation has the following three business divisions:

1. Policy Advocacy & Gender Equality (PAGE);
2. Technology & Enterprise Support Services (TESS);
3. Administration & Finance (AF).

The Small & Medium Enterprise Web Portal (SMEWP) has been implemented by the Small & Medium Enterprise Cell in the Ministry of Industries, with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank, Manila. The SMEWP has been architected to work as a Content Management System (CMS) where the data are largely organized down a vertical menu, as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ▪ Business startups | ▪ Development partners |
| ▪ Access to finance | ▪ Government policies |
| ▪ Capacity building | ▪ SME foundation |
| ▪ Forms and applications | ▪ Other members |

The Ministry of Industry also introduced the Small & Medium Enterprise Helpline Centers, within the framework of the Small & Medium Enterprise Sector Development Programme (SMESDP), the ADB-assisted technical assistance (TA) project. Thirty-two such helpline centers are now operating in twenty-five districts of Bangladesh.

3.6. Small & Cottage Industries Training Institute (SCITI)

SCITI is a training focused specialized organ of Bangladesh Small & Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC). In fact, it is the only government-sponsored training institute in Bangladesh that is meant for conducting entrepreneurship development training. It also offers training on various aspects of enterprise management for small and cottage industries, viz. General management, Industrial management, financial management, and Marketing management. In addition to training it also offers research and consultancy services to the new or existing entrepreneurs. SCITI, located at Uttara, Dhaka has been operating since 1985. Most of its training programs are conducted at Uttara. However, sometimes it offers courses at different district levels in collaboration with the respective Industrial Service Centers of BSCIC based on needs and convenience. It has a total of 85 employees of which 27 are teaching staffs and the rest are support staff. SCITI has a full-fledged computer lab with internet facilities, an

audiovisual laboratory, a library with 8000 books, and a provision for residential accommodation for the trainees (70 persons).

3.7. Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIM)

Bangladesh Institute of Management (BIM) is the successor of the then Management Development Centre, East Pakistan, established in 1961. The purpose of the Institute was to impart short term training on specific subjects and Postgraduate Diploma in different areas to individuals and employees of both the public and private sectors. Apart from offering short term, subject-specific training programs, at present the Institute is offering Post Graduate Diploma in Personnel Management, Industrial Management, Marketing Management, Financial Management, and Computer Science.

3.8. Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR)

The Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research was established in 1973 (Cabinet Resolution No. 1(24)/73-C.S.I.R., dated the 16.11.73) comprising the inherited Laboratories of the then PCSIR namely the then East Regional Laboratories Dacca, the then Natural Drugs Research & Development Institute, Chittagong, the then North East Regional Laboratories, Rajshahi and the Dacca Center of Pakistan National Scientific and Technical Documentation Center (PANSDOC). The Head Office of the Council was established at the Dhaka Laboratories campus. In 1975 the Council was placed under the Ministry of Education and Science and Technological Research. The aims and objectives of the Council were to initiate, promote, and guide scientific, industrial, and technological research having a bearing on problems connected with the establishment and development of industries in the country. So far it developed 514 Patents and Processes. Its activities include research and technological activities, the publication of research journals and reports, and analytical and other services to the industrial enterprises in Bangladesh.

3.9. Bangladesh Industrial Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC)

Established in 1962 by merging the IRDC (Industrial Research & Development Center) and the IPS (Industrial Productivity Services) as PITAC (Pakistan Industrial Technical Assistance Center), the organization was renamed BITAC after independence. Presently, BITAC has four regional centers at Dhaka, Chittagong, Chandpur, and Khulna. A project has been undertaken to establish another regional center at Bogra. The major objectives of the center are to train industrial personnel to upgrade their skills, to provide technical assistance to industries through technology transfer, manufacture, of important substitute machinery parts, advisory and consultancy services, to assist industrialization of the country by promoting productivity, quality improvement, cost-effective production, usage of local raw materials and indigenous techniques, etc., and to provide technical assistance to the industries in various fields including plastic technology and related tools, jigs, fixtures, and metal processing die, etc.

3.10. Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI)

Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) came into being in 1985 through an Ordinance (Ordinance XXXVII of 1985) with the merger of Bangladesh Standards Institution

and the Central Testing Laboratories. Later on in 1995 Department of Agriculture Grading and Marketing also merged with BSTI. BSTI is a body corporate and its concerned Ministry is the Ministry of Industries. The institution's task is to prepare standards for all articles, products, methods, and services. The Institution can bring under BSTI's Compulsory Certification Marking any product after approval of the Government. The standards approved, and passed by the Institution are called Bangladesh Standards (BDS).

The major Functions of the Institution are to set up Bangladesh Standards of quality and dimensions and prepare and promote the general adoption of standards on national and international basis relation to materials, commodities, structures, practices, and operations and, from time to time, to withdraw, revise, alter and amend the same; to implement Bangladesh Standards through the administration of a national certification mark scheme or inspection of goods or both; to provide or arrange facilities for examination, testing, and inspection of commodities, processes, and practices for any investigation, researcher promotion of export that -may be necessary and to issue test reports; and to certify the quality of commodities, materials, produces, products and other things including food materials, whether for local consumption, export or import;

3.11. National Productivity Organization (NPO)

National Productivity Organization (NPO) is a Government department under the Ministry of Industries established in 1989. It is a national level specialized organization to promote productivity and thereby accelerate the pace of economic development through its multidimensional activities like creation of productivity awareness, development of productivity infrastructure, and implementation of the productivity improvement program. NPO is the only organization responsible for the formulation and implementation of the productivity policy of the Government. NPO also implements the plans and programs of the Tokyo based Asian Productivity Organization (APO) which is an inter-government body for the Asia Pacific region. The Major activities of NPO include: conduct regular and special training courses on productivity for improvement of management personnel, supervisors, workers, and trade union officials; organize seminar, symposium, workshop and discussion meeting on productivity issues at the national, sector and firm level; collect and compile productivity-related information and store them in a Data Bank for dissemination, and render guidance and consulting services to enterprises for improvement of productivity.

3.12. Department of Youth Development (DYD)

The Department of Youth Development was created in December 1981 under the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the aim of transforming unproductive youth into organized, disciplined, and productive human resources. Through different projects and a total of 309 training centers, DYD offers training to poor and unemployed youth in rural and urban areas in various trades and income-generating activities such as livestock, poultry, Pisciculture, computer use, repair of electrical equipment, electrical and house wiring, refrigeration, and air conditioning. Training is

also given in human development areas such as youth leadership, communication, motivation, personnel management, problem-solving, and decision-making.

DYD training courses are designed in the light of target beneficiary needs established through pre-evaluation tests or the administration of questionnaires. Course duration varies from one to six months, depending on the nature of the course. The DYD advertises its courses in the national dailies. Successful candidates must be ages 15-30 years, dropouts from school/college, or unemployed youth. The DYD provides technological assistance, extension services, continuous counseling and guidance, business information through seminars and workshops, and to some extent infrastructural support.

3.13. The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI)

The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) was established in 1958. It serves as a model of a non-profit, service-oriented organization. It has rendered more than four decades of very useful services for the development of business and industry in Bangladesh. The basic functions of the DCCI relate to the promotion and development of trade, commerce, and industry. Both the local and foreign entrepreneurs come to the DCCI with requests for services they need. DCCI established the Business Advisory Service (BAS) project in 1996 to offer research, information, counseling, and training programs to the entrepreneurs. It also established a specialized training Institute called DCCI Business Institute (DBI) as an extension of the BAS project to provide training on different aspects of business and Management including entrepreneurship development.

3.14. Micro Industries Development Assistance and Services (MIDAS)

Micro Industries Development Assistance and Services (MIDAS) is a renowned promotional organization in the private sector. It was set up in 1982 to support the development of micro, small, and medium enterprises. MIDAS renders financial and technical assistance to micro, small and medium enterprises, and existing and would-be entrepreneurs. MIDAS also offers training, information, and consulting services to national and multinational companies, government organizations, NGOs, donor agencies, and individuals in various areas relating to technology, management, production, marketing, finance, export development, etc. Financing small enterprises is one of the most important functions of MIDAS. The lending operation of MIDAS, however, is now being handled by its subsidiary company named MIDAS Financing Ltd., which is a public company limited by shares.

In addition to above institutions/organizations, there are many NGOs like Grameen Bank, BRAC, Proshika, Caritas, Saptagram, GSS, Ideas, and World Vision, Buro Bangladesh, ASA, etc. and Associations Like, National Association of Small & Cottage Industries, Bangladesh (NASIB), Women Entrepreneurs Association (WEA), etc. also offer various support services like training, microcredit, advocacy, trade fair, etc.

4. Studies on Institutional Support for Entrepreneurship Development in Bangladesh

A number of studies were conducted on the nature and quality of the services provided by various organizations in Bangladesh to the novice and existing entrepreneurs. Highlights of Some of such studies are presented as follows.

Momen and Rahman (1990) indicated the measures for the success of entrepreneurs and explored the correlation between different services and success of entrepreneurship. The analysis showed that insufficiencies of stimulatory, support, and sustaining services hinder the entrepreneurship development in the country.

Hoque (1992) highlighted the role of some of the ILO/UNDP/USAID sponsored projects in the promotion of entrepreneurship development in the country. USAID funded MIDAS offers entrepreneurship creation training programs besides usual management training and technical assistance. It also offers credit facilities for selected projects. It organizes such programs in association with international agencies such as the GTZ (German Technical Assistance Agency) and Technonet-Asia, Singapore. ILO assisted the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) project conducted several one or two day conferences in smaller towns and gave some introduction to different self-employment avenues to the youths. However, Hoque (1992) felt that BMET's technical training failed for a lack of coordination with banks. On the other hand, the efforts of Productivity Services Wing (PSW) of the Bangladesh Employers' Association (BEA) for small enterprise development were found to be concentrated in selected locations in Dhaka city only and their activities were found not cost-effective. Hoque (1992) believes that these institutions have made some good beginning in the field of entrepreneurship and small business development and there was scope for bringing improvements through technical assistance to these institutions. Any effort and investment to strengthen the capabilities of these institutions are bound to bring a highly beneficial impact on the creation of new enterprises and more jobs for the unemployed in Bangladesh.

Mannan (1993) in his paper titled "Small Scale Industrialization in A Labor Abundant Low Growth Economy: The Bangladesh Experience" explored the development of small scale industries in Bangladesh with particular emphasis on the special role played by the NGOs and foreign aid. Based on secondary data he concluded that the Grameen Bank, BRAC, MIDAS, Proshika, Caritas, Saptagram, GSS, Ideas, and World Vision had a positive contribution to the rural industrialization of Bangladesh through motivation, functional literacy, group formation and extension of easy credit. They were found to assist in activities like petty trade, crafts, poultry, livestock, and fishery in rural areas. In addition to NGOs, he identified the major donor agencies, like IDA, NORAD, DANIDA, IFAD, USAID, UNDP, ILO, etc providing funds for the promotion of small scale industries in Bangladesh.

M.M. Rahman (1993), in a case study on entrepreneurship in a small scale industry observed that at the inception stage, there was no role of institutions. However, their (particularly BSCIC) advisory and the supportive role was found instrumental for the expansion of the organization. Saleh (1995) in his study on twenty BSCIC and BMDC-trained women entrepreneurs found that, in some cases, the women entrepreneurs receive discriminated treatment from supportive agencies. Akhtaruddin (1999), found that all entrepreneurs, irrespective of success and failure groups, have experienced considerable delay in sanction and disbursement of loans from the

financial institutions. Procedural complexities and negative attitudes of the officials of financing and government agencies are indicated as major factors for delay in the implementation of the units.

Chowdhury and Majid (2002) studied the role of five institutions namely, BSCIC, DCCI, MIDAS, JOBS, and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad in providing stimulatory, support, and sustaining services to the existing or potential entrepreneurs of the country. They observed that among these five intuitions, BSCIC performed the essential functions of the entrepreneurship development most consistently. However, they found that out of 31 assistance services, BSCIC performed only 15 followed by DCCI (14), MIDAS (13), and JOBS (10). Bangladesh Mohila Parishad was found to perform entrepreneurship development activities only as a byproduct of their overall social welfare program. The study revealed that entrepreneurship development activities offered by these institutions were fragmented and limited in nature. It was also found that stimulating entrepreneurial development services were more focused than that of supporting services and sustaining services were least provided.

5. Conclusion

Thus, it is obvious that there are several institutions, in one way or the other, involved in the process of entrepreneurship development in the country. Even though institutional support services are essential for small business at its every stage of development, it is more critical at the initiation and growth stage. But it is found from the above studies that the institutions responsible for providing various services to give impetus to entrepreneurship in Bangladesh are not performing at par. They are lacking in their technical, managerial, and behavioral aspects. So to yield greater result these institutions should be equipped with more resources and the employees of those institutions should be trained to be more proactive in providing services to entrepreneurs indiscriminately. Moreover, entrepreneurship development requires an integrated approach rather than some sporadic initiatives. Therefore, the support organizations must chalk out a comprehensive milieu of services so that they can sort out the problems of the budding entrepreneurs.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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